

EXHIBIT NO. 7

DATE 1-24-11

BILL NO. SB 141

January 24, 2011

Re : SB 141 - AN ACT PROMOTING SAFE SCHOOLS AND CREATING THE
MONTANA SCHOOLS ARE FOR EDUCATION ACT

Members of the Senate Education and Cultural Resources Committee:

Disability Rights Montana supports SB 141 as it would require early investigation of bullying allegations as well as early intervention to provide counseling and other remedies to both the alleged victim and the persons alleged to have engaged in bullying.

People with disabilities and their families have long known that bullies single out vulnerable children. Kids who use wheelchairs, kids with developmental disabilities, and kids who are blind are often chosen as targets for this harassment.

Increasingly research is bearing this out. Studies have shown that:

- Children with medical conditions that affect their appearance (e.g., cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, and spina bifida) are more likely to be victimized by peers. Frequently, these children report being called names related to their disability (Dawkins, 1996).
- Children with hemiplegia (paralysis of one side of their body) are more likely than other children their age to be victimized by peers, to be rated as less popular than their peers, and to have fewer friends than other children (Yude, Goodman, & McConachie, 1998).
- Children who have diabetes and who are dependent on insulin may be especially vulnerable to peer bullying (Storch et al., 2004).
- Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are more likely than other children to be bullied. They also are somewhat more likely than others to bully their peers (Unnever & Cornell, 2003).

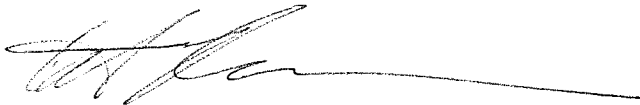
Bullying can have serious consequences and it is important that it is addressed early. Targets of bullying are more like to:

- * Be depressed, lonely, anxious;
- * Have low self-esteem;
- * Experience headaches, stomachaches, fatigue, and poor appetites;
- * Be absent from school and dislike school; and
- * Contemplate suicide.¹

All children need to be able to attend school without fear of bullying. Early intervention is the key to helping not just the targets of bullying, but to helping those students who engage in bullying to end this behavior.

Please support SB 141.

Sincerely,



Beth Brenneman
Staff Attorney

¹ According to the Health Services and Resources Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services at www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov.